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Viewing cable 06SANJOSE706, RODRIGO ARIAS, MINISTER OF PRESIDENCY

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06SANJOSE706**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06SANJOSE706	2006-03-30 23:12	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy San Jose

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-16/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2715440.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-16/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2715446.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-16/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2715448.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-16/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2715447.aspx>

VZCZCXYZ0022
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSJ #0706/01 0892312
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4635
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 000706

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: RODRIGO ARIAS, MINISTER OF PRESIDENCY

REF: A. SAN JOSE 443

Classified By: Amb. Mark Langdale for reason 1.4 (b&d).

Much More Than a Brother

11. (C) Rodrigo is the younger brother and by far the closest adviser to Oscar Arias. He is the only permanent member of Oscar's inner circle and has always been at his brother's side in business and politics. Since Oscar's divorce and the death of his mother, Oscar has come to rely even more on his brother (see ref A for more on the Oscar-Rodrigo relationship). On March 16, Rodrigo described his role to the Ambassador as that of "Costa Rica's Prime Minister."

12. (C) Rodrigo personally oversaw the effort to remove legal obstacles to Oscar Arias's repeat presidential campaign. When efforts to negotiate a change to the 1969 law forbidding second terms failed in the Legislative Assembly, Rodrigo engaged several law firms to challenge the law on constitutional grounds--despite his brother's public pledge not to invoke the courts. Rodrigo Arias managed the successful electoral campaign, and is now managing the transition. He was Oscar's first cabinet nomination--to be Minister of the Presidency, which is equivalent to Chief of Staff with additional responsibilities for liaison with the Legislative Assembly and oversight of the intelligence service. Rodrigo held this same position during his brother's first term.

Political, Educational, and Employment History

13. (U) Rodrigo Arias began his involvement with politics in 1974 when he was elected, at age 27, to the City Council of Heredia, a major suburb of the San Jose metropolitan area. Rodrigo was chosen by his peers to chair the council until the end of his term in 1978. He served as Minister of Presidency during his brother's first term (1986-1990). Rodrigo also served for six months as a senior adviser to President Pacheco during 2003. Rodrigo stepped down over differences with Pacheco confidants like Richardo Toledo and due to pressure from PLN leaders interested in forming a full-fledged opposition in response to the Pacheco Administration's falling popularity.

14. (U) A lawyer by training, with a degree in commercial law, Rodrigo Arias graduated from the University of Costa Rica (UCR) in 1969. He obtained a Master's Degree in commercial law (M.C.L.) from the University of Pennsylvania in 1971 and returned to UCR to teach law from 1971-1973. In 1971, Rodrigo also joined Facio and Canas, one of Costa Rica's largest and oldest law firms. Although he resigned from the firm in 2003 to insulate it from his campaign to re-elect his brother, Rodrigo apparently maintains a financial interest in the firm as a retired partner.

15. (U) In addition to his law practice, Rodrigo Arias has spent a substantial part of his career in corporate leadership positions. In 1974, Rodrigo assumed and still holds the presidency of the Taboga Sugar Refinery, which is owned in part by the Arias family. Between 1971 and 1985, Rodrigo held positions such as treasurer, legal adviser, director and vice president of the Costa Rican Stock Market. From 1997 to 2003, Rodrigo served as president of the stock market. Since 1990, Rodrigo has directed the Agricultural and Industrial Sugar Cane League. Since 1996, he has served as president of the Sugar Producers' National Chamber and has been on the board of the Central American Division of the British American Tobacco Corporation since 2001.

Personal Information

16. (C) Born July 26, 1946, Rodrigo is nearly six years younger than Oscar. Rodrigo Arias married Milena Grillo in December 1977. They had three children, Maria Andrea (DOB 27 Aug 1978), Rodrigo Antonio (DOB 2 Feb 1980), and Juan Rafael (DOB 4 Mar 1982), before divorcing in October of 1994.

Although Rodrigo jealously guards his privacy, he is noticeably happier, according to insiders, since he began dating Gretty Clausen Gutierrez, the former wife of Manuel Jimenez Echevarria, President and part-owner of La Nacion, Costa Rica's largest daily newspaper. Rodrigo told the Ambassador on March 29 that he will undergo hip replacement surgery during the April 21-23 time frame.

Hint of Scandal

¶7. (U) In July of 2005, as the campaign was heating up, La Nacion published documents insinuating that Rodrigo Arias had engaged in influence peddling in 2001 to support EBI, a Canadian company, in its successful effort to win a sole-source landfill contract with the City of San Jose. After the Comptroller had twice rejected the contract for insufficient sole-source justification, EBI's local representative requested assistance from Rodrigo Arias's law firm, Facio and Canas. Rodrigo telephoned the Comptroller, and nine days later the contract was approved with no further justification required. Facio and Canas billed EBI \$1,500. Rodrigo admits making the phone call, denies wielding any influence, and called the bill for his services a mistake. No charges were ever filed. The timing of the news report was clearly related to the electoral campaign and led to calls for Rodrigo to step down as campaign manager. Oscar Arias flatly and publicly rejected the notion, and the issue quickly faded.

Comment

¶8. (C) It is difficult to overstate the power Rodrigo Arias exercises as the self-described "power behind the throne." Oscar seems quite content to rely on his brother as a gatekeeper. It is clear that Rodrigo's opinion on any important issue will be a key factor in understanding the decisions of the second Arias Administration. Oscar is the deep thinker, and it is Oscar's vision that will drive the government. But it is Rodrigo who makes things happen.
LANGDALE